

## Presentation of Chiara Lubich

*Vera Araújo*

Allow me to present Chiara Lubich, at least for those who do not know her.

Her human and spiritual story started in the city of Trent, the place where she was born and where she completed her studies.

In 1943, during World War II, together with some of her friends, Chiara rediscovered in the Gospel old but, at the same time, new values that are able to give back to man his real dignity and to reorganise the human family with unity and fraternity.

This is how the Focolare Movement was born. It holds a new spirituality, both personal and communitarian; two features that together are able to give rise to dialogues in all areas: within the Catholic Church, amongst the Christian churches, amongst believers of the great religions, amongst people with no religious beliefs but who are of good will and with contemporary culture and knowledge.

Chiara leads all activity herself and this is the reason for her visits around the whole world and her speeches in numerous international headquarters.

At the same time, the literary activity which arises from her life and from her thought is very intense: she has published 45 books starting with “Meditations”, which reached 21 editions and which has been translated in both western and eastern languages, up to the recent “The Spiritual Doctrine”, which gathers part of the immense richness of her charisma.

Public opinion and many international institutions have begun to become aware of Chiara’s work and several recognitions have been given to her from all over the world, starting from the 70’s. These acknowledgments include the “Templeton Prize” for the progress of religion (London 1977), the “UNESCO Prize” for peace education (Paris 1996) and the “Council of Europe Prize” for human rights (Strasbourg 1996).

In 1998, Brazil awarded her with “The South Cross”, while Germany presented her with “The great cross for merit”. Italy made her “Knight of the Great Cross” in 2003.

She has received 14 Honorary Degrees assigned to her by American, Asian and European universities.

She is also honorary citizen of various cities around the world including Rome, Buenos Aires, Florence, Milan and many more.

However, what characterises Chiara’s work is love towards mankind, towards all men because it always considers each one as a possible candidate for unity and as a brother who asks for no more than to be loved and served.

This unlimited love has given rise, from its very heart, to hundreds and hundreds of social activities in aid of the poorest, such as the Economy of Communion, a worldwide economic project; cultural activities such as publishing houses, periodicals, audio vision centres for both spiritual and cultural formation; family, youth, teenage and parish movements in order to insert the spirit of unity and fraternity in all environments.

All those who meet Chiara remain touched and fascinated by her simplicity, profoundness, cordiality, and ability to communicate and build relationships.

Many have described her as one of the greatest figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

For us who share her same ideal and who work with her for its fulfilment, she is simply Chiara, a fulfilled woman and Christian.